**Wheelchair Safety Issues**

*I have a special education student who is transported on the bus in his wheelchair.  He likes to put his feet in his lap and chew on his shoes, shoelaces, etc.  The problem is that Mom did not want his feet restrained in any way so the school removed the footplates from his wheelchair.  At school, the laptray keeps him from his shoes, but on the bus, he does not wear the laptray.  I’m thinking this is a safety issue but was wondering if this is covered under any transportation law/policy?  What are your thoughts?*

Good Morning!

I ran this scenario by a couple of experts in the area of SN Transportation to get their input as well.  I will summarize our thoughts for you.

First of all, yes, the lap tray is a safety issue and not recommended by the National School Transportation Procedures.  The lap tray could do substantial damage to a student if the vehicle is involved in an accident.  While the foot plates are not necessary, they usually help a child to sit in a better position.

A great suggestion from Alex Robinson is to employ the use of a Foam Lap Tray.  It is much safer for transport and could alleviate the problem as it seems to have done in the classroom.  That way, the child is sitting in a way that is consistent with how he sits in the classroom.  Easy Way Products has a foam lap tray.  You can contact Bob Rubin at 800.543.0575.

Other suggestions were to remove the shoes after the child has entered the bus and to give him a tactile stimuli that might replace the need to chew on the shoes.  A nerf toy or one of those squeeze items for stress?  The Transportation Department may even have one shaped like a school bus.

Training for the driver and monitor on this route should include drawing attention away from his feet, reinforcing hand behavior, not mentioning the feet/shoes at all …trying to move his thoughts away from this inclination.

The other consideration of course, is to make sure and include transportation personnel in the ARD so that everyone understands the issues and can make an informed decision as to what is the safest way to transport this child, possibly with a BMP for riding on the bus with goals written.

I hope this helps!

Please feel free to contact me if I may be of assistance in any other way!

Good Luck,

Marisa

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